

ICS Seminar Series

INSTITUTE FOR CULTURE AND SOCIETY

Posthuman Livelihoods: Rethinking 'Development' Beyond Economy, Society, and Environment

Ethan Miller

Date

Thursday 13 November

Time

11.30am – 1pm

Venue

EB.2.21 Parramatta
(South) Campus

Abstract

Struggles over regional development and sustainable futures are commonly posed as a conflicted encounter between the domains of the *economic*, the *social*, and the *environmental*. Whether the task is to choose between inevitable trade-offs, seek balances, or enact harmonisations, the core schema of thought often remains unquestioned. Accepting such terms of engagement, however, risks reinforcing a particular, historically-produced configuration as inevitable and obscures crucial possibilities for enacting development otherwise. Indeed, many of the pressing challenges of our era cut across and through these three categories, destabilising them in ways that render their ongoing use problematic. Might we explore political articulations beyond this trio that might enable more open and generative framings of collective ethical and political negotiation? I engage question through encounters with professionals in the state of Maine (USA) whose work is ostensibly oriented around the distinctions between economy, society, and environment. Drawing on recent interviews, I make three moves: first, a *tracing* of ways in which common mobilisations of the three categories are complicit in reproducing capitalist hegemony, nature-culture divisions, and the marginalisation of more-than-human living beings and processes; second, a *decomposition* showing how the internal multiplicity of the categories cannot be contained by hegemonic renderings; and finally, a *recomposition* that amplifies emergent yearnings to move beyond the three categories through a concept of 'ecological livelihoods'. Thinking in terms of the myriad ways in which our livings are made, given, and received from others might serve to mark out new terrain upon which to transformatively engage with questions of 'development' and its alternatives.

Biography

Ethan Miller is a doctoral candidate at the Institute for Culture and Society and a member of the Community Economies Collective and the Community Economies Research Network. He earned his M.S. in geography at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, and is currently working at the intersections of post-development economic geography, radical democracy theory, and post-humanist ecological philosophy. His PhD research aims to enact a simultaneously critical, deconstructive, and creative engagement with discourses of economy, society, and environment among public policy professionals in the state of Maine (USA). Ethan has also worked for the past fifteen years on an array of grassroots economic organising and popular education projects focused on cooperative and ecological modes of livelihood, and is a co-founder of the U.S Solidarity Economy Network, the Data Commons Cooperative, the JED Collective cooperative farm, and the Clark Mountain Community Land Trust.